

21 September 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Graham

SUBJECT: IHC COINS Memorandum

25X1A 1. Attached is a draft plan for COINS file improvement prepared by [ ] at the request of [ ] Nate's instructions were to address those areas in which "quick fixes" could be applied within the present COINS configuration. Prior to preparing the memo, Nate discussed the problem in detail with [ ] and me. Nate actually prepared his memo during the evening of 19 September and gave it to [ ] on the morning of 20 September with copies furnished to PRG [ ] note back to [ ] is also attached. 25X1A

2. The memorandum generally covers the areas of interest in terms of the requirement and it impacts directly on the PRG. The first task involving my substantive check of a number of COINS files is already underway. One case study, [ ] has been drafted and CRS is working on five others. This requirement is certainly within the PRG area of responsibility and will pose no problem. 25X1A

3. The inclusion of [ ] National Operations and Intelligence Watch Officers Net (NOIWON) products into the COINS system, discussed in paragraph 8, will be explored in greater detail as the NOIWON project develops. 25X1A

25X1A 4. The project proposed in paragraph 9, i. e., exploring "branch files" in CIA and DIA for possible inclusion in COINS, is one which would overtax our already committed and limited assets. While [ ] and I could all make contributions to the development of the terms of reference for such an examination, the exhaustive legwork required by this project could probably be better carried out by the existing ASD(I) Files Working Group or another committee especially convened for this purpose.

OSD HAS NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION  
AND RELEASE.

OSD review(s) completed.

5. All of us have been working very closely with Nate in his new capacity as Acting Chairman of the Information Handling Committee, and we are all in general agreement on the kinds of things that have to be done. In this case, it would have been desirable to have had a chance to look at the memorandum before it went to [ ] but Nate had no alternative, given the tight suspense imposed on him. We will get a chance to input and comment on the "Plan of Action" that [ ] has requested from the IHC.

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**Attachments**

**Distribution:**

Orig - Adse, PRG Subj.

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- 1 - PRG Chrono

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21 SEP 1973

Honorable William E. Colby  
Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Bill:

25X1A As you know, we established a Working Group some time ago to review the data bases available to the community through COINS, with an eye toward improving the file selection wherever possible. [redacted] of the IC staff and [redacted] of CIA are members of that group. 25X1A

The review group has prioritized the files of interest to the community by surveying the possible interagency users for the level of their interest. The group is presently investigating the technical feasibility and the resources necessary to make the high priority files available to COINS users.

25X1A DIA is in the process of creating several new files which the community has asked to see on COINS, and they will be complying very soon. This is a splendid step toward a more open exchange of information than we have had in the past, and I have commended [redacted] on this action. 25X1A

The community users also feel that the CIA FORCES file is one of those highly desirable files which should be available through COINS. The CIA member of the Working Group has investigated the technical and financial implications of making this file available and has reported that approximately one week's programming effort would be required to make the file compatible with the NSA system.

I believe it to be in the best interests of the community to provide this file to COINS as soon as possible not only because of the high

interest expressed in its contents, but also as a gesture of community cooperation. I'm sure you will agree that a prompt action at this time would be most beneficial.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Albert C. Hall

NSolat:jd - ODASD (I&WS)  
X51830 9/18/73

SENDER WILL CHECK CLASSIFICATION TOP AND BOTTOM  
UNCLASSIFIED CONFIDENTIAL SECRET

### OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP

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**Remarks:**

*Clearly you understand the problem: but who is going to do what by when? That is a plan of action.*

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FROM: NAME.		DATE	
		9/20/79	

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19 September 1973

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MEMORANDUM FOR: 

SUBJECT : Plan of Action for COINS -- File Improvement

1. This draft plan focuses on actions that can be taken starting immediately to advance and improve COINS. Major, complex plans are being formulated for the longer range -- including plans for computer netting, multi-level security, on-line query and response, et al. This paper does not focus on those longer run aspects, but rather identifies the constructive steps that can be undertaken now by the DCI and ASD(I) to improve the present configuration of COINS and to demonstrate that this project is being pushed forward in a determined way.

2. The area in which to focus short-run steps to improve COINS relates principally to the improvement of the files, both those now in the system and those which can be identified and placed in the system under the present COINS configuration. The following paragraphs propose concrete steps and illustrate how to go about each task identified.

3. File content and coverage. COINS files principally provide specific individual items of information, usually about Order of Battle or Installations. There is little evaluated and integrated data, the product of a more sophisticated type of intelligence analytic effort. The question is: how to upgrade content, how to improve coverage? To this end, the task proposed in this paragraph is to involve USIB committees and IC/PRG to help develop the content guidance, to validate the need for particular kinds of data, to accept a degree of responsibility for seeing to it that certain files are developed, including summary files that eventually permit trend and statistical analysis. ASD(I) has been given a responsibility for conducting an interagency COINS files working group, and that group is now at work. The involvement of USIB committees and IC/PRG would supplement the working group effort, but be independent of it.

*absolutely*

Caveat. ASD(I) has a claim to be involved with the DCI in working out an approach to the involvement of USIB committees in a project for which ASD(I) has been designated Executive Agent. This needs to be accomplished in a manner acceptable to the DCI. We should be careful not to get out in front of the DCI by permitting ASD(I) de facto participation in USIB matters or the USIB forum.

4. File cross-referencing and notations for users. Present and potential file users need guidance in using COINS files easily and effectively. All files should contain cross-references and other notations to assist users to ascertain information such as the following: what does the file contain? what is omitted? what other files relate in a subject sense or hierarchically? what is the status of the data as respects currency of content? who, i.e., what organizational component, is responsible for creating and maintaining the file? to whom should further inquiries be directed? The task proposed in this paragraph is to examine each file now on COINS or projected hereafter for COINS to insure that appropriate cross-references and guidance notes for users appear therein. This could be done in an orderly way by the present interagency files working group, as a continuation of their present assignment. In addition, IC/PRG could contribute by making a number of tests for the purpose of expressing their user/analyst-oriented view on what kinds of guidance notations should be included; this could provide an authoritative frame of reference for the Solat committee to use in working out the procedural details.

5. File reliability. This involves improving the assurance to the would-be user that certain files said to be in the system actually are there, that they are actually up to date in accordance with the updating schedule, that they actually contain all that their official published descriptions claim. This involves assigning official responsibility to specified organizations for the creation, maintenance and quality of files. It also involves monitoring the performance of that organization in doing this job.  comments summarizing his perceptions from the recent PFIAB meeting on COINS make the point that "the community ought to be educated that storage and retrieval of information is a part of the intelligence process." The task proposed in this paragraph could be carried out through the interagency files working group, which would be an appropriate body to find facts and make recommendations. The recommendations have resource recommendations. To implement those recommendations, my tentative view is that it would be desirable to have them emanate from the DCI, wearing either a USIB or IRAC hat; this would also permit IC/PRG an opportunity to share in this process.

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Caveat. The alternative is to have ASD(I) implement within DOD, and have ASD(I) request DCI and D/INR to implement in CIA and State. I do not favor this because it puts ASD(I) in a community role that I think belongs to the DCI.

Parenthetically, these considerations get us into the question of how to define ASD(I)'s role as "Executive Agent" for COINS, as well as the phrase "under the auspices of".

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6. File incompleteness. File improvement includes making a determined effort to eliminate as many security and dissemination limitations as can be dispensed with. Here, the effort is to remove the barnacles of institutional parochialism, while preserving security and dissemination limitations that really can be justified. The task proposed in this paragraph has two parts: first, to illustrate the problem; second, to attack it. The former aspect can be accomplished with the help of IC/PRG; [ ] has already prepared one case example and is undertaking several more, to demonstrate the different results that sometimes are obtained when one queries an agency file as a member of that agency and when one asks the same question of the version of that file which appears in COINS and is available to persons outside the originating agency. My tentative plan, when these samples are complete, is to disseminate them to Solat and the interagency files working group, and call on that body to propose solutions. Solutions will not be achieved quickly or easily, to the extent that they involve agency-imposed security limitations on the dissemination of information collected under a variety of sensitive conditions. Ultimately, when the problem is properly organized, with supporting evidence, and a clear delineation, it could appropriately come to a focus in USIB, with decisions required by the DCI in consultation with agency heads. USIB is the appropriate forum and the DCI the ultimate decision-maker because this matter is clearly one of "sources and methods." Another aspect of this problem appears to relate only to the incompleteness of the COINS file, due to arbitrary limitations in the COINS computer programs; this sort of difficulty, when encountered, is not policy-related, and ought to be solvable at a technical level.

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7. Standardization of data elements and codes. The COINS Project Manager has urged that USIB/IHC work on this matter, and in the past the IHC has made efforts to promulgate standards (see IHC Document 127/27, 13 December 1972, USIB Data Standard: Armed Service Grade). This matter formerly came under OMB Circular A-86 of 30 September 1967, implementing Public Law 89-306. By Executive Order 11717, 9 May 1973, the OMB responsibilities were transferred to the Department of Commerce. DCID 1/15, Data Element and Data Standardization for Intelligence and Intelligence Information, is one of the package of

*was issued on 14 Oct 69.*

-3-

*a revision by*

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DCIDs drafted for Mr. Helms' signature but never signed. <sup>The existing DCID 1/15</sup> ~~It~~ cites OMB Circular A-86 and states that "the IHC will establish methods and procedures for developing and maintaining data elements, data codes, and related features to be used in the intelligence community." The task proposed in this paragraph is first to ascertain the DCI's present policy as to whether <sup>existing</sup> DCID 1/15 can now be used and referred to as a basis for IHC action; if so, this topic could be placed on the agenda for an early IHC meeting which would discuss the organization and work of a sub-group of the IHC to be responsible for this matter. I am not now prepared to propose a specific method of attack on this very complex question. The IHC files of past efforts and discussions make it clear that this is a subject that could involve large amounts of time and manpower. With future manpower limitations and the nature of the subject, it is probably not practicable to adopt other than a selective approach. That needs to be defined. Agency-perceived prerogatives and sensitivities are very much involved. The selective approach should include focus on the areas of COINS where it appears particularly worth the effort to fight the battle of standards.

8. Analytical content of files. File improvement includes demonstrating an intention to upgrade COINS files in terms of their substantive/evaluative content. At present, most COINS files offer only factual data, such as Order of Battle or Installations. Files reflecting the product of analysis and integration of data are largely absent. This point was made clearly by members of the PFIAB Science Panel at their review of COINS earlier this month. The challenging question is: how to place within COINS files of a much higher quality of substantive content, in order to stimulate the use of this system for a much more sophisticated type of analyst use? Some persons experienced with the process of intelligence analysis at higher levels express doubts as to whether a machine system can ever share directly in the process of reasoning by which intelligence judgments are arrived at. It may not be necessary to address that question directly, since a machine system can contribute to some kinds of analytic thought with a greater level of sophistication than is now reflected in COINS. For example,  IC/PRG, is now involved in a very significant effort to develop an interchange of appraisals of current operational matters in a National Intelligence Community Watch Officers' Net, resulting in end products called Watch Officers' Bulletins and Notes. This form of analysis of current events is one in which the information being evaluated can be structured and formatted, and is thus easily capable of computer manipulation.

25X1A The task proposed in this paragraph is to support [ ] current efforts. The IHC Staff is assisting with technical support related to setting up a communications net for watch officers and is investigating technical capabilities for video display of documents and data in a user network. [ ] believes that the hard copy products of the Watch Officers Net could be an interesting file for COINS, both as illustrative of how to go about formatting an analytic file for data manipulation by computer, and as a sample of a file for COINS that is more substantive than those presently available in the system. If one is looking for evidence of progress in the short term, this offers an interesting and hopeful possibility.

25X1A 9. Analytical content of files (cont). A second project that would get to the heart of the question as to how far highly substantive files could be placed in COINS also involves IC/PRG. This project, if undertaken, would explore some of the so-called branch files in CIA. These have been the crown jewels of the working level analyst, upon which he places principal dependence. For the most part, these are hard copy, although they may be supplemented with computer routines in some cases. An exploration, which could be spearheaded by [ ] 25X1A [ ] in IC/PRG, for example, aided by IHC staff, could look into sample files to identify what it would take in the minds of the user analysts to satisfy them that some COINS substitute could do all or part of the job now done by their branch files. A comparable exploration in DIA could be headed by [ ] or one of the military members 25X1A of IC/PRG. I would emphasize that the branch file question is as tough a problem as any that is likely to be encountered in the effort to evaluate the ultimate capabilities of a COINS-like system to aid substantive analysis. It may be too early to tackle this very tough question, but reference herein at least identifies the topic for future consideration.

25X1A 10. COINS evaluation mechanisms. File improvement includes the development of some form of COINS network management information and evaluation system, principally to serve the COINS Project Manager, Sub-System Managers, and ASD(I) and DCI overview authorities. [ ] has this in mind, and he talks in terms of development of mechanisms for doing a better job of measuring the use of COINS, its performance, and its utility. This aspect of COINS improvement includes steps to improve our own understanding of the real character of potential user interest in files for COINS. In turn, that gets us into the distinction between information that the user "must have" versus the information that is "merely nice to know but not essential." There are cost implications here too. The bundle of evaluation mechanisms

that I visualize under this general heading involves an effort by [ ] office to improve its statistics and methods of measurement -- this depends in part on funding that [ ] has requested for FY-74. There is a role for the Solat interagency files working group, because it can serve as a vehicle, in addition to [ ] office, for collecting data on the specific costs and character of use of COINS files. The IC/PRG could also be involved because PRG is in the best position in the community to provide guidance on how to appraise and characterize user interest and user performance. The task proposed in this paragraph is to start with an ad hoc dialogue between [ ] Solat, [ ] and IC/PRG representative(s), to take a fresh look at what [ ] present statistics appear to tell us and how they could be made more meaningful. An additional result of looking again at [ ] statistics and related information should be to call on [ ] to produce an informational package descriptive of COINS that would be appropriate as a briefing aid for an audience meeting COINS for the first time. There seems to me to be a need for such a package, characterizing what COINS really is now, what it is not, what it does, what it doesn't do, and the like. I formed this impression listening at the recent PFIAB meeting to the several varieties of conceptions and misconceptions as to what COINS is, does, and should be. [ ] has lots of figures, but I have not yet seen or heard him present the COINS story in utter, direct simplicity to an audience that is not going to be able or willing to follow him into the myriad details and technicalities of the project. A non-technical briefing package, addressed particularly to analytic content and capabilities of COINS, would be helpful. It is what is needed now to assist in discussions with analysts and resource managers as to what COINS could mean to them if properly developed.

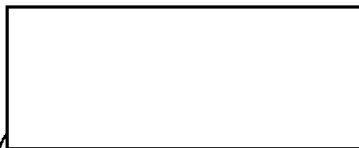
[ ]  
Acting Chairman  
Information Handling Committee

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MEMORANDUM FOR: *Mr Colby,*

*The things worth looking at in the (Mal-  
lein) report are marked  
with clips.*



*10/4*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

July 31, 1973

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### Talking Paper on COINS for DCI @ PFIAB

COINS stands for Community On-line INtelligence System. In practice it permits intelligence analysts sitting at electric typewriters connected to their own and other agencies' computers to withdraw and manipulate information. Had the COINS concept originated in the Community before such typewriter-computer connections had proliferated we would have, I believe, few if any problems now. That, however, is not the case.

The COINS concept arose in 1965, largely due to impetus given by this Board and was formalized in early 1968 as an experiment by DCI Helms. Since then, COINS -- and related activities in DOD -- has proved its feasibility and we can now end the "experiment" and become operational.

COINS operates under the auspices of the DCI; the working responsibility for this lies with General Allen and the IC Staff. The ASD(I) is the Executive Agent and the Program Manager's Office is at NSA. "Host" computers -- as those with accessible files are termed -- are at DIA, NSA and NPIC. These computers permit access to files up to SI TK originated by these agencies and by CIA and through DOD communications by the Pacific and Continental Air Defense Commands. COINS is presently being queried by approximately 100 terminals of a potential of nearly 300. During June

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there were about 2700 queries to COINS, an increase of 50% over previous months when NPIC data were not available.

As a beginning I'll recount briefly my perception of COINS' problems or needs in rank order -- perhaps some of you will have other views and I will appreciate them and benefit from them. Then I will tell you what I intend to do about these matters.

1. Propagation of the faith which we have in COINS that it can improve the quality and timeliness of our substantive intelligence is necessary. We will need to become activist in informing, training and motivating analysts to use COINS. COINS is a product which can figuratively and quite literally make money for the community and we must market that product aggressively.

2. Common language -- the words analysts use to "talk" to computers -- varies from agency to agency. For example, to access a data file, one analyst may say "get" and another "fetch" so a computer is like a country: you have to speak the language to do business. We can fix this problem: one approach is technical, the other social.

3. File quality -- its scope, accuracy, currency and so forth -- is a problem also when analysts deal with information in data banks in a number of agencies because presently we have no standards for these virtues nor if we did, means of enforcing them. Clearly file quality has a bearing on propagation of COINS in the intelligence community for if there is lack of confidence there is lack of use.

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4. Interactive capability is not so much a problem as a goal or need. Presently we "bulk process" queries to a computer: this means an analyst asks, along with others, until an adequate batch of queries is formed at which time the computer responds to all more or less at once. The analysts might, under bulk processing, wait half an hour or more for a response which clearly could be too long under some circumstances. We know how to fix this problem so as to give near real-time response and to a degree fix the common language problem also.

5. There are management problems also; these really comprise "all other." I put this last not because I think management problems are least important but because the solutions are either clear and easy or obscure or general or only nascent. They are:

- a. need for adequate COINS funding on a line-item basis;
- b. computer and files security (which is not peculiar to COINS);
- c. interfacing communications systems of COINS and DOD's Intelligence Data Handling System (IDHS);
- d. clarification of the Project Management Office (NSA) relations with the Executive Agent (ASD-I).

What to do about these problems? Some modest funds and some attention can care for them. Through the mechanism of IRAC -- the Intelligence Resources Advisory Committee -- I intend to do two things:

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assure that COINS funding is not fragmented in each agency's budget but that there is line item funding, for COINS is in fact of central concern;

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and I will assure that adequate funds are available in FY 74 -- about [ ] --

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and in FY 75 -- about [ ] This funding will permit us to transfer

DARPA technology for computer netting to COINS. At once, this can give

us an interactive capability to the degree local computers permit and

moderate the COINS-IDHS interface. The COINS Executive Agent is

presently considering what his recommendation will be for attaining a common

language. We will in addition deploy more persons to COINS subscribers --

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we now have [ ] - who will counsel, inform, help or do what it takes to

get wider acceptance. I personally believe this is the crux if at the same

time we are improving files.

In the USIB forum, I will give my approbation to COINS and solicit cooperation of the members in improving files quality in their agencies and in giving stimulus to the use of COINS. I will use my IC Staff to assure that the focus on file improvement and system utilization is maintained.

Following discussions in USIB and IRAC I will sharpen the DCI's interim guidance given to ASD(I) earlier this year by a new directive terminating the COINS experiment inaugurated in 1968, declaring it operational and seeking these new levels of performance.



Talking Paper on COINS for DCI @ PFIAB

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